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ABSTRACT

Programs for developing the managerial capacities of department heads in secondary schools tend to be of two types. One type concentrates on the dynamics of interactions between participants during the program. In this type of program, consultants either call for active involvement of the participants in the analysis of their interactions, or provide that analysis for them. The second type focuses on the presentation to participants of the conceptual, empirical, and practical developments in the relevant management studies areas. Participants either actively engage in applied research directly related to their particular situations, or more passively receive less directly relevant information from consultants. A program incorporating the active aspects of both approaches is advocated in this document, and examples of such a program in action are provided. (Author/PGD)

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TRAINING HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
FOR AN EFFECTIVE MIDDLE MANAGEMENT ROLE

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The paper is concerned with the effectiveness of Management Programs for Heads of Departments in Secondary Schools and with an attempt to further develop an approach to research and teaching in education management as described by M. Parsons and G. Lyons (1). It analyzes the initial reactions in a long term project which addresses itself to the interrelationship of research and training strategy directed to Heads of Departments in Secondary Schools, and to those with whom they regularly come into contact.

A project of this kind is central to the issue of 'quality control' in education. A standard textbook and management encyclopedia defines total quality control as "an effective system for integrating the quality development, quality maintenance and quality improvement efforts of the various groups in an organization so as to enable production and service at the most economical levels which allow for full customer satisfaction" (2).

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Management training programs for the Heads of Departments in Schools can be seen as part of the above mentioned system when the broad definition of quality control is applied, with modifications, to educational organizations.

The ideas and thoughts formulated in the paper are mainly derived from our experience of conducting management programs and studying educational institutions, and schools in particular. We are also influenced by a variety of theoretical and empirical approaches to management training and research in general, though we may not refer to any of them specifically. In other words, our own reflections and assertions, about what we have observed ourselves while interacting with the clients in our role of tutor/consultant, blend with models and propositions developed by others in the field.

The ultimate end of such a project (so far we have reached the preliminary stage) is to generate theoretical ideas and/or re-state the existing theories in order to clarify and re-state categorizations of behavior, and roles performed in the interaction between the client groups and the 'providers of learning' (teachers, trainers, consultants, researchers).

The Head of Department As Manager

Our aim is to aid making the Head of Department (HoD) in schools an effective middle manager. Therefore, let us look briefly at his job context.

The tasks the Head of Department is being asked to undertake in the typical comprehensive school are increasing in volume and complexity. He can no longer afford to be 'the senior teacher in the department'; he has become the manager of a team of professionals within a bureaucratic and hierarchically organized educational enterprise. The success and the future of the comprehensive system can quite rightly be said to rest upon the effectiveness with which the department performs its functions, and the Head of Department his.

The existence of the post in its present form is directly attributable to the needs of the previous secondary system, and its philosophy. The question, therefore, to pose now is what are the needs of the present system/pupils and how are they best met?

- . There have been rapid and extensive changes in curriculum and in the associated teaching hardware;
- . Increasing legislation covering employment relationships;
- . A greater number of specialists all increasingly encroaching upon the Head of Department's functions;
- . A growing public disenchantment with what schools are offering.

All of these features may be seen by the individual as impinging upon his areas of responsibility and authority, and give crisis to his role identification.

There are moves to a more open and direct participatory decision making process and in this the Head of Department is expected to be a prime mover, whether or not he welcomes or has misgivings about this change.

He experiences a strong sense of frustration at some of the hierarchy's expectations of him;

- . That it does not give him sufficient backing;
- . In achieving certain goals no account is taken of factors over which he has no control;

- He has a key role to play in implementing the decisions of the hierarchy, yet his involvement in their decision making--which is likely to have a key bearing on his job--is probably minimal;
- He may not be in receipt of enough information from the hierarchy to do his job effectively. In turn, the hierarchy frustrated by this barrier, this inability of the Head of Department to implement their policies, may directly contact classroom teachers, thereby compounding the difficulties they caused in the first place.

The dichotomous nature of the Head of Department's loyalties--to the hierarchy of the school, and to his colleagues within his department--seems to be insufficiently understood or appreciated by the hierarchy of a school. One of the most likely consequences is the hierarchy's insistence that he, as their representative, should carry through their policies, put them into operation, and convince his colleagues of their necessity. Failure to do this inevitably raises questions as to the poor quality or ineptness of the Head of Department concerned. More pertinently this focuses upon the Head of Department's role as a link between hierarchy and classroom teachers, and upon the conflict implicit within the role itself. The post is traditionally a stepping stone in the career of the teacher to a post in the hierarchy or to another post within the educational system. The recent economic squeeze, as well as the future contraction of the system, makes this function open to increasing doubt, and throws increased strain upon an incumbent Head of Department. It poses quite fundamental questions as to the Head of Department's future training and development. It also begs the question of whether he received sufficient, or any, training for his present post.

Management programs designed specifically for the Heads of Department in the secondary school are seen by us as a way of tackling the problems that the Head of Department increasingly faces in the school.

There may exist a variety of strategies concerned with improving the performance of the Head of Department, and subsequently with improving the quality control in schools. Our approach constitutes one of the potential strategies.

An Experiential Learning Framework for Management Training

Our own philosophy of training and consulting bear close relationships to the learning framework as developed by Kolb et al. (3). Although it is basically a learning model, it provides also a convenient framework for pinpointing the research and teaching strategies that we have adopted. We do not follow explicitly the Kolb model during our programs, but as both the Kolb model and our approach to training share similar assumptions, it is worthwhile to give a brief description of this model. Kolb and his associates identified four stages of a learning and problem solving cycle. The stages are as follows: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). As far as a training program is concerned the four stages (see Figure One) relate respectively to: (I) exercises and a variety of practical activities (CE), (II) discussions and sharing reactions to activities (RO), (III) generalized summaries, formal inputs by tutors, readings (AC), (IV) testing out the generalizations, asking new questions, testing the implications of what was learnt (AE).

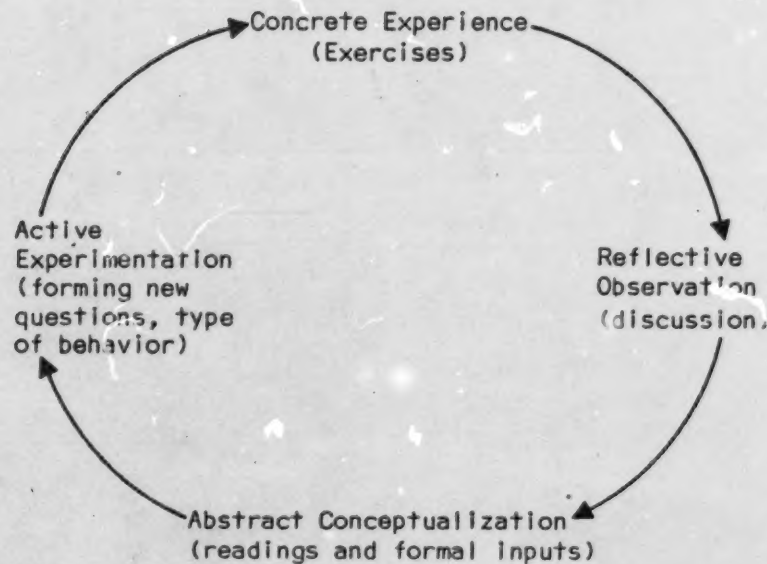


FIGURE 1. The Experiential Learning Cycle Model (4)

An initial management program is conducted away from the workplace, i.e. the school, and consists of participants coming from a number of schools but from one Authority (there may be 1-3 persons from the same school). Thus, the program does not, almost by definition, cover the fourth stage of the model--Active Experimentation, though preparing the ground for it can be entertained during sessions. The Active Experimentation ought to and can take place only as a back-home application. The fundamental question that we may address ourselves to is whether that stage always occurs.

Our teaching/training strategy rests on the premise that relevant (for the participants) and effective management programs ought to embrace or lead to the Active Experimentation stage, i.e. to active implementation of the learning at different levels of the institution, the school in this case. It is only then that the connection has been made between the learning as such and the desired outcomes of a program for the participants, i.e. acquisition of skills and knowledge as related to the work context.

This is obviously not an original stipulation. After all, any management training aims at the transfer of learning and skills applications.

However, some researchers and consultants have considered the transfer of learning to the workplace in a rather narrow and limited manner while examining the effectiveness of management programs (5). Their studies provide very little information and propositions to aid the program's users in implementing the learning from courses at organizational level, as they are directed towards other fellow researchers. In other words, a great many of research findings on the conduct of management training are not concerned with the Active Experimentation at institutional level, though they may refer to it on an individual level. Of course, a great number of studies have examined change programs in organizations, schools included (6). But again these studies have often addressed themselves to other fellow researchers and trainers rather than to the clients. It should be made clear at this point that we do not suggest

that trainers and consultants in the field ignore the clients' needs (7). Our point is that little research or inquiry, as we prefer to call it, has been conducted for the clients and with the clients, so as to help integrating the training program with the institutional implementation.

It is consistent with an experiential learning framework to find out what the personal objectives in attending a program are: if all four stages of Kolb-like model are to be successfully followed the training program ought to be of relevance to the participants.

Participants of a recently run program were requested to state their personal objectives in coming on our program. Let us give a few examples of these objectives:

- . "To improve the organization of the department and my own performance as HoD";
- . "To gain some personal insights into self";
- . "To find out how to relate my departmental contribution to the rest of the school";
- . "To gain in confidence";
- . "To discover my strengths and weaknesses";
- . "To meet others doing similar job".

The stated objectives are not identical, and sometimes quite different. However, they all share a common feature: they combine personal development and school-oriented objectives, though more emphasis is put on the former one.

The participants were also asked to state the school's objectives in sending them on the program. It appears that often they were not dissimilar from the personal objectives, as perceived by individuals. Yet a number of participants were not sure about their school objectives in this context and/or thought that the school might not have any.

All this leads to one of the fundamental problems for us in running the programs for HoDs.

We intend to conduct programs as effective as possible from the point of view of the clients, whoever the clients are. The individual participant, the school (the Head) or the LEA advisory team, which is not just an agent for the participants, but finances the programs. If all of those groups are our clients (and we suspect they are, though they differ in the nature of the client/consultant interaction that takes place between them and us) our task of training the HoD for an effective middle management role becomes increasingly complicated. A personal development objective, valid as it is, if met does not necessarily make the school any more effective or correspond to the objectives set by the advisory team.

In this paper, we are not concerned with the possible varying needs of our clients with regard to offered programs. We indicate it, however, as this problem has bearings, though indirectly, on the outcome of the training courses.

A 'Working' Model of Tutor/Consultant's Approaches to Management Training

Our thoughts and ideas relative to the conduct of management programs and possible tutors/consultants' strategies can be demonstrated by presenting a 'working' model of tutors/consultants' approaches (styles) to management training programs. This model, based on our and other experiences is a somewhat crude attempt to state how training programs, in general, and programs for the

middle management level in schools, in particular, may be conducted (8). We assume that the tutor's approach involves two basic dimensions: Process Analysis, i.e. Facilitation of Learning and the Expert's Input, i.e. providing the participants with results of Inquiry and/or conducting Inquiry relevant to a program content. Figure 2 summarizes the model in a simplified way.

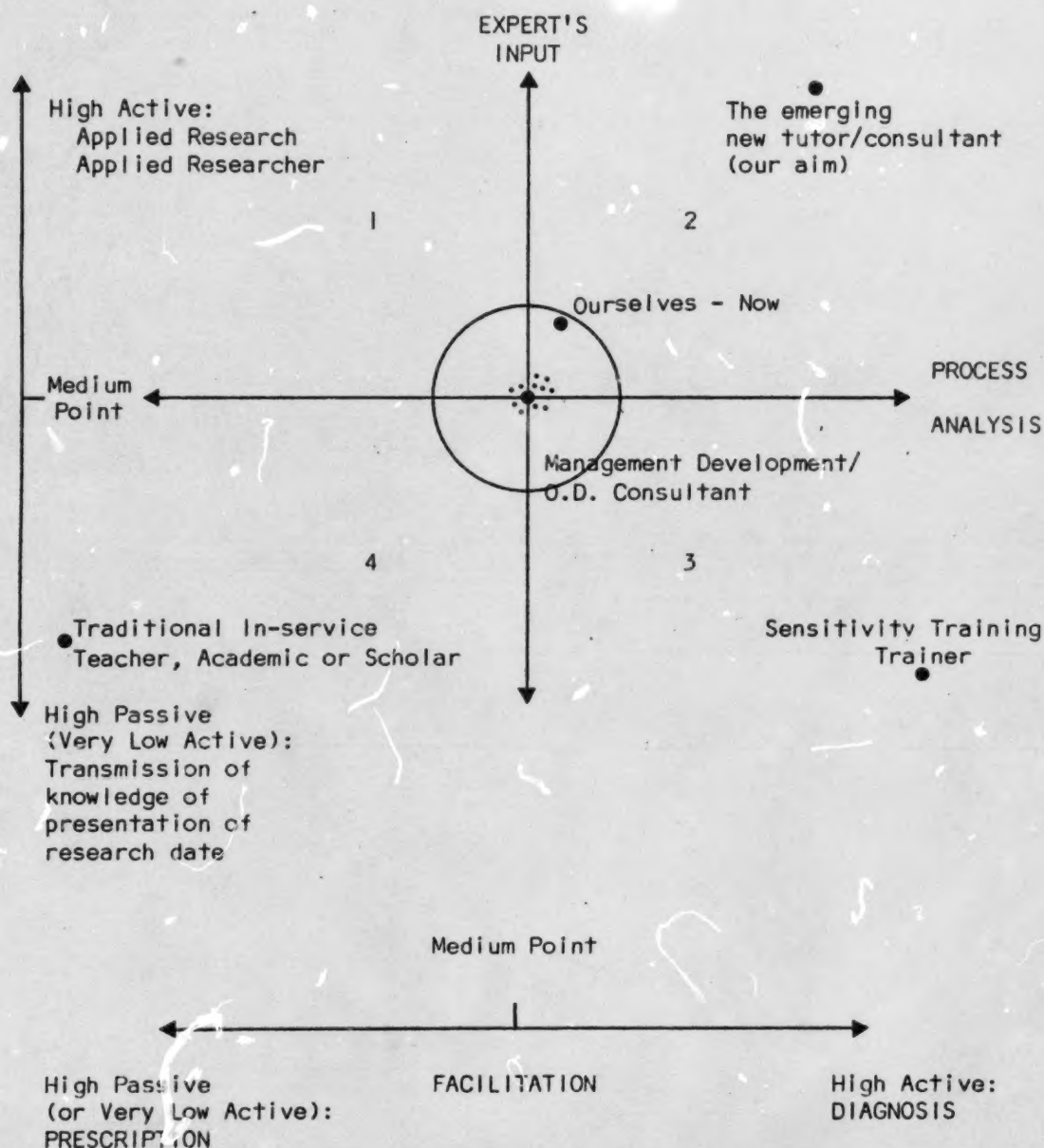


FIGURE 2. A Simplified Model of Approaches to Consultant/Tutor's Role
(Process Analysis versus Expert's Input)

The Process Analysis dimension, illustrated by the horizontal axis, is concerned with helping participants of a program to examine the dynamics occurring in the learning group(s), while conducting the various activities and sessions. It also aids to increase the trainees' self-awareness and self-discovery in respect of different facets of the participants' attitudes and behavior in relation to work. The emphasis is very much on the here-and-now elements of the group activities, though relevance to the there-and-then situation, i.e. the school, are suggested. The self-discovery activities relate by definition to the there-and-then when, for instance, modes of behavior at work are considered. But they are discussed in the here-and-now context. The participants compare and share their individual data with each other. The tutor helps to summarize the data for the whole group(s) and makes suggestions about how the sharing process may be arrived at. The Process Analysis can be made in a variety of ways ranging from a highly Active Facilitation, i.e. the Diagnosis, to a highly Passive Facilitation (or very low Active Facilitation), i.e. the Prescription. The Diagnosis focuses mainly on describing what happened and how 'it' happened during an activity (often a simulation or role-play exercise), and leaves to the participants themselves to state and consider the question of Why and What ought to have happened. The Prescription about the process tends to be more interpretative and evaluative; it looks at the Whys of the interaction and 'incidents' that took place. It also suggests, in a more or less directive way, what ought to have been done to improve the process.

It should be noted that Diagnosing does not rule out confronting the participants on their behavior or attitudes. The Diagnosis need not be smooth, soft, 'over-neutral'. The Diagnosis is a technique of the Process Analysis, of the Facilitation. Equally, the Prescription, also a technique, does not have to imply patronizing, preaching or else. It can be presented in a supportive and considerate manner, so that the 'messages' put across by the tutor/consultant are not rejected because of the style of presentation.

One tutor/consultant will rarely be either a 'Diagnostician' or a 'Prescriber'. He/she will, however, tend to emphasize one approach more than the other one. We ourselves differ in the emphases that we make during our jointly conducted programs.

In our own approach to Process Analysis, when it comes to specific training methods, we rely to a large extent on so-called Structured Exercises, though often non-directive (in the sense that we tell the participants what to do but not how to do it). The boundaries of the learning tasks are pretty specific and the processes involved in the activities are usually controllable and clear in advance. Such an approach seems to be the most appropriate one for a basic program like ours.

Diagnosis requires a very active role on the part of the tutor. The tutor needs to react immediately and often acts on intuition in his/her response to the dynamics of the group.

Prescription involves a more passive (relatively) role. The tutor gives more general insights into the activities and makes general statements about the issues considered. He, however, still focuses on the dynamics involved during the exercises.

The Expert's Input dimension, illustrated by the vertical axis, is concerned with providing program participants with the conceptual, empirical and practical developments in the specific management studies areas that underpin programs' content.

The Expert's Input focuses on the Whats of programs: What the main problem areas in a particular topic are; What the facts about the organizational reality of the schools are, as provided by research evidence and experience; What the role of the Heads of Departments is, as perceived by the Heads themselves and by others. In other words, the Expert's Input supplies the available body of knowledge in the matters under consideration, as derived from empirically researched studies and from clinical observations of the school's reality.

Similarly to the Process Analysis dimension, the Expert's Input can be made in a variety of ways. It ranges from Active Inquiry (applied research) to Passive Inquiry, i.e. transmission of knowledge and/or presentation of the Tutor's own research data but not directly relevant for participants' utilization.

The combination of the varying degrees of the Facilitation, on the horizontal axis (Process Analysis axis) and of conducting the Inquiry, on the vertical axis (Expert's Input axis) allows to arrive at a crude typology of five basic approaches to the tutor/consultant's role while conducting management programs. A high Passive Inquiry (or very low Active one) combined with high Passive Facilitation (or very low Active one) is best illustrated by the traditional in-service training tutor or highly academic researcher or scholar. A high degree of Active Inquiry combined with a high degree of Passive Facilitation is best illustrated by an applied researcher. His/her Inquiry is aimed at the clients (or a closely related group) and practical implementations may be entertained. But the presentation of his/her findings is kept at a highly 'academic' level, as no diagnostic facilitation is attempted, i.e. to feed back the data to the clients (program participants), for them to examine and work through the implication of it, while a program is on.

A high degree of Active Facilitation combined with a high Passive Inquiry characterizes trainers of T-groups, self-awareness workshops and alike. This approach to education management is more widely employed in the USA than in this country.

A high degree of Active Facilitation coupled with a high degree of Active Inquiry is the least used approach, not only to management programs for schools or other educational institutions but, also to programs conducted for the industrial world.

This is, indeed, a kind of approach to management programs that we advocate, though we recognize that adopting it is compounded by several problems. It requires a higher than usual commitment and combination of skills on the part of the tutors/consultants, that are not always compatible with each other. To be capable of and interested in carrying out a minute research-type activity and knowledge transmission, and at the same time to be involved in a highly facilitative activity is not always reconcilable for one person. The approach may not be feasible because of constraints of time, individual energy, resources and setting that exist within the context of a program. Attempts to overcome such obstacles can be made by involving two or more tutors in a particular program. We do not mean just assuring contributions of several specialists which

is a common practice, anyhow. It is the joint design and conduct of a program, which entails a complementary and mutually supportive approach to training by the tutors/consultants, that is essential. If this joint willingness exists, the opportunities will increase to pull together often separate, but related, training styles and intellectual and research interests. Consequently, the possibility of combining the high degree of Active Facilitation (Diagnosis) with the high degree of Active Inquiry (Applied Research) becomes much more viable a proposition.

A program that adopts this approach will probably be more effective when the tutors do not share identical preferences with regard to the approach to training, but complement each other. Yet, it is crucial that they both value each other's preferences of styles.

The discussed type of approach to management programs constitutes for us a normative model of management training, namely one that we advocate and strive for, as much as it constitutes an on-going process of management training that occurs, in varying degrees, already.

We direct our efforts as tutors/consultants into applying that model in practice (i.e. on our programs). However, for a variety of reasons, our attempts have not so far been fully satisfactory. There are reasons that may be beyond our control--such as accessibility of research (inquiry) data from participants' schools. Our diagnostic/inquiry tools also need some improvement.

Thus, the approach that combines highly Active Inquiry with highly Facilitative Diagnosis is an emerging one, to which we hope to arrive. We would now place ourselves in quadrant (2) though close to the axes.

Therefore, at the present time our practice of management programs for Heads of Departments in schools reflects the fifth basic approach to the consultant/tutor role, that is characterized by a moderate degree of Active Facilitation and a moderate degree of Active Inquiry. The Figure 2 shows this approach around the area where the horizontal and vertical axes meet.

This approach to management training is typical of Management Development and Organizational Development programs with a behavioral and human resource management orientation.

Illustrations of the Advocated Approach to Conducting Management Programs and Summary of Follow-up Inquiry in Schools

Having identified our 'desired' and 'actual' approaches to management training, we would like to illustrate briefly how we attempt to employ them on our programs for HoDs. We will focus on two programs that have been recently conducted for an Authority in England. (An outline of a training program is available from the Notebook or the authors.)

How did we attempt to combine the research/teaching strategy that we advocate? Every course participant was sent prior to the commencement of the program, a manual written up by Geoff Lyons. The manual consists of some background information about the Head of Department job, both theoretical and practical, partly based on research data, i.e. interviews conducted with various school members. The participants were also requested to keep a diary for a few days of the tasks upon which they spent their time (9). This was considered, to some extent, during the program. When the participants arrived to the course,

they were given Part Two of the Manual. Part Two gives typical examples of day-to-day management problems the Head of Department faces, based on collected data and organized according to conceptual framework developed by Mintzberg (10). The participants were invited to compare the selected data with their individual data. It was hoped that Part Two would function as a diagnostic/inquiry tool by getting the participants to conduct their own 'inquiry' in relation to the available data of other inquiries. As noted elsewhere Part Two proved not helpful enough for the Heads of Departments. The integration of Part Two in the main activities of the training program was also problematic, though it was suggested that Part Two could be a tool for back-home applications. However unsatisfactory Part Two might be, it showed a need for the HoD to look at his own situation, i.e. conduct his/her own 'inquiry' and diagnose his/her problems. This reinforced our view that a more sophisticated combined, facilitating and inquiry, approach would be very useful, as we would produce the necessary research-based tools as to allow the participants to conduct their own diagnosis. The self-inquiry/self-diagnosis instruments necessitate improvement. We have already begun to work on the refinement of a diagnostic framework for examining the Head of Department's skills.

Our insistence on the Inquiry as part of a training program concerns also the very process of designing and conducting the programs. We are interested in the inquiry on how to improve the basic course; in other words, we adopt an action-research approach to ourselves. Accordingly, a short Feedback Questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the end of the course.

The Feedback Inquiry data were taken into account when a similar program was run several months later. On the whole, the program was seen as very successful by the participants. People felt that they learned about themselves and about the role of the Head of Department.

A few months after the end of the recently run program we made a follow-up visit (a mini inquiry) to several schools, from which came the program participants. During the visits we held interviews with the participants and, in most of the schools, with the Headmasters and/or the Deputies. The purposes of the visits were as follows:

To check post-course reactions a few months on; to find out how much of the course learning was applied in the school and at what levels; to find out about the use of the Manual--i.e. the potential diagnostic/inquiry material; to solicit ideas and suggestions as to a possible re-design of the program for a similar group of clients; and to discuss with the Heads their views about the purpose and usefulness of the program for the school, the Heads themselves (as institutional leaders) and the Heads of Departments.

The interviews highlighted a number of useful points, though they partially reinforced some of our views, particularly the one that related to the transfer of program learning to the school.

The course was still seen as a successful program: It was regarded as a vehicle of the participants' individual career and development.

However, no real application of the course learning was made at the school (institutional) level. The manual was not widely used either, except for individual usage by some participants. Dissemination of information/course material took place occasionally. This is, however, different from organizational

and management applications. It appeared from the interviews that the participants were able to move beyond the traditional in-service training approach to courses of this kind. Several people indicated or implied that the program helped them in better coping with the job demands and the immediate environment, as a shift in their work attitudes took place. In other words, some of the participants were more able to 'work out the system' and to operate as individuals within the school. They probably learned some 'survival skills' which may at times collude with the organizational system of the school. These abilities may or may not be of any relevance to the Head and the school as a whole. The Heads seemed to confirm such an outcome of the course.

Some people emphasized that post-course reinforcements were needed for sustaining and/or attaining individual and school-wide applications. As one participant put it . . . "The course generated a very high degree of enthusiasm but as time goes by I end up again muddling through . . ."

Participation in Training Programs and Institutional Implementation

It has been indicated already in this paper that one of the central questions that we address ourselves to is the question like this: what are the reasons for not applying the course learning at the institutional level? At this point possible reasons can be tentatively identified.

- A. 'Internal' factors related to the program itself:
 - (a) The program objectives, content and structure are not adequate;
 - (b) The tutors' style and approach to training are not suitable for the participants' needs and modes of learning;
 - (c) The Manual in its present form is not seen as a diagnostic tool for school applications;
 - (d) The program gives--by definition--only an appreciation of management skills (an initial and short course).
- B. 'Human' Factors: the course participants do not possess yet the necessary skills and/or are unwilling for a variety of reasons to get involved, to take risks, in institutional applications.
- C. 'External' factors:
 - (a) The conditions in schools do not allow for implementation;
 - (b) The inter-personal relations between the Head and the participants are not conducive to it;
 - (c) The inter-personal relations between the participants and the other staff members (classroom teachers, other Heads of Departments) are not conducive to it;
 - (d) The participants' position in the school (they do not hold the reins) limits the accessibility and opportunities for applications;
 - (e) The Head's perception and view of the role of the Head of Department and of the purpose and functions of programs of this kind are such that they impede application.

Any combinations of these factors can impinge upon the implementation of learning at the institutional level. At this stage the gathered data show that at least Aa and Ab are not hindering factors. Satisfaction with Aa and Ab constitutes a necessary and potential element for successful application but not a sufficient one.

An important factor that was discussed during our visits to schools was the Head's view about such programs. The involvement of the Heads in the programs seems to be essential, as many participants indicated. Some Heads approved of the idea as well. This involvement could take different forms: a special conference for Heads to examine the role of the Head of Department, attending the program for Heads of Department by Heads in a quasi-observing capacity, 'formal' work with the course participants on the implementation of learning, Heads taking part in formulating the program orientation, etc.

Obviously the Head's willingness to be involved in the program, in one way or another, is crucial. Our visits to schools would suggest that no consensus view exists among the Heads talked to, as to how, if at all, to integrate the course program into the school and how Heads could involve themselves in this exercise.

Concluding Remarks

In the concluding remarks we wish to emphasize that we do not lay claims that our advocated approach is the only one that is appropriate. When this approach is developed even further, no miracles will be achieved. However, this approach represents an attempt to improve the effectiveness of management training for schools, by insisting on a research/teaching strategy as a vital element of tailor-made programs.

It can be added that no approach to management training/consultancy will aid to solve all the problems schools face. Moreover, it is likely that often problems cannot be solved at all. A distinguished American policy analyst, Aaron Wildavski, (11) has formulated a view recently that may apply to the schools context as well. He argues like this: 'Instead of thinking of permanent solutions, we should think of permanent problems in the sense that one problem always succeeds and replaces another.' Our position is similar to that view. School problems ought to be constantly diagnosed and researched about; just seeking solution, without properly examining the problems, can turn out a futile exercise.

Let us end this paper with a personal note that underlines what has underpinned our thoughts. The note paraphrases what some Applied Behavioral Scientists have strongly argued about: If our clients prefer for the sake of relevance the vigour rather than the rigour of our insights as tutors and consultants, so be it!

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